

government investment, additional government spending. That has come about because of cuts in taxes, which left the money in the hands of entrepreneurs and the people who create capital and create jobs, not coming from the government.

Our folks on the other side of the aisle can continue to spend. They, again, and their willing colleagues in the media and in Hollywood, they can try to change what are the facts, the people from the left, but the economy is strong, and it is growing stronger every day under Republican leadership.

Do I want to see spending cut even more? You are right. Do I want to see tax cuts made permanent? You are absolutely right. We need to do that. We need to make the tax cuts permanent, and we need to cut our spending so we put more money into the hands of the entrepreneurs and into the hands of business people who can truly create wealth, who can create jobs. The government cannot do that.

I am asked a lot of times by school groups, what is the difference between Democrats and Republicans. Well, there are a lot of differences between us, but usually we are in a time crunch and I do not have a whole lot of time to explain all of the differences. So I tell folks I am going to give them the short version of what is the difference between Democrats and Republicans. It really is sort of at the nub of the issue between what is the difference between us.

Democrats think that government can solve all of our problems: Take all the money you can from the public, give it to the government, let the government solve our problems. Republicans believe that Americans work hard for their money and they should be allowed to keep as much money as they possibly can; the government should only step in to do those things that people cannot do for themselves.

The Democrats have turned that on its head. It would be cradle to grave. Again, socialism. They would do their best to try to take care of everybody. It would not be a very pretty picture, though. We can already see that. The hand of government in so many things in our country now is taking away a lot of the incentive for people to work. It is creating, again, this culture of entitlement, which we have to get away from.

The Declaration of Independence in our country talks about the pursuit of happiness, not the delivery of happiness to the people from the Federal Government. We are free to pursue happiness and pursue prosperity.

There are some other good things about this economy that I want to share. Earlier this week, the Commerce Department reported that consumer spending shot up by nine-tenths of 1 percent in January, the strongest gain in 6 months. In addition, Americans' personal incomes rose by seven-tenths of 1 percent, the highest rate since September. Again, our economy has a posi-

tive momentum, and that momentum is the direct result of a pro-growth agenda from the Republican-led Congress and our Republican President.

□ 2240

It is the Republicans who are proposing that we slow down the rate of spending and that we leave more money in the hands of the American people. We want to have improved fiscal responsibility and at the same time show our commitment to continuing economic growth. We are the party that is working to improve the lives of the American people by lowering taxes, enacting legal reform, decreasing government interference into the lives of entrepreneurs and small business owners. That is what we have to do.

Democrats, on the other hand, want to continue to promote their tax-and-spend policies because they think they know how to spend the American people's hard-earned money better than they do. However, I think the Republicans know better than that and will prevail on this issue.

I hear a lot from my constituents about the high cost of health care, and I have used this analogy before: when I grew up, I grew up in the mountains of North Carolina, extremely poor, no electricity, no running water. My family was very poor. There were no jobs in those days in that part of North Carolina, but my family could afford health care. Even though we had very little money, both my parents worked, and I began working when I was 12 years old; but health care was not as expensive as it is now, and everybody that I knew of could afford health care. But almost nobody had insurance.

In fact, I guess only school teachers maybe who worked in our county, may have had health care through the State of North Carolina; but nobody else that I know of had health insurance, and so people could afford to go to the doctor when they got sick.

Now, we didn't run to the doctor for every little thing; but when we truly needed health care, we could get it, and we could pay our bills for it. I remember that very, very clearly.

However, what has happened in the last 50 years? Why has health care become so unaffordable for people? Why has the cost of health insurance gotten so high? I contend that the reason that has happened is because of the third-party payer. And the biggest third-party payer is the Federal Government. Any time you get the Federal Government involved in something, it is going to drive up the cost of that commodity. We know that. We have seen it happen in lots and lots of cases, but I do not think there is any case where it is more clearly the case than it is with health care.

The fact that we have gotten involved in Medicare and Medicaid is driving up the cost of health care. We also see that Medicare and Medicaid determine what is going to be paid out in other programs, because that is the

benchmark that insurance companies use. And so because people are getting their health care primarily from the government or from a third-party payer, folks are not scrutinizing how much it is costing. They do not care. They just say, okay, if an aspirin costs \$150, that is okay, I am not paying for it. Insurance is paying for it.

It is again a part of that entitlement mentality we have created and taking away the personal responsibility that we used to have so much of in this country. Because of government programs, we are diminishing the sense of personal responsibility and increasing the sense of entitlement. Slowly but surely, we are changing the entire culture of this country.

When I served in the North Carolina senate, I had a good friend from Asheville, North Carolina, who served with me and who used a wonderful analogy many times, and I think it is a great one to use here. What he would say is: if you throw a frog in a pot of hot water, he will jump out of it. But if you put a frog in a pot of cold water and then you gradually turn up the heat a little at a time, pretty soon that frog will be cooked and he wouldn't even notice it.

That is what has happened in this country over the years. We have turned up the role of the Federal Government, we have turned up the sense of dependency on the government, and what we are doing is we are creating major problems for our country. We are creating an entitlement mentality which we have to break ourselves away from or else we are going to find that we have a whole generation of people that think it is the government that should take care of them.

That is what I think my Democratic colleagues want, because they believe in the power of the government. Republicans believe in the power of the individual and of individual responsibility. And I think this is a message we are going to have to keep telling. It is going to take a long time, I think, for it to get out and for it to be absorbed and for people to be able to see the wisdom; but it is something we are going to need to talk about more and more.

And we have to talk about it honestly. We cannot continue the hypocrisy that is being used by our colleagues who talk on the one hand about decreasing spending but on the other hand taking care of everybody from the cradle to the grave and doing everything from the Federal Government level.

THE 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to once again address the

U.S. House of Representatives. We would like to thank the Democratic leadership for the time, Democratic leader NANCY PELOSI, and our Democratic whip, Mr. STENY HOYER, and also Mr. JAMES CLYBURN, who is our chairperson.

Also, we would like to come to the floor once again, Mr. Speaker, to share not only with the Members but with the American people the priorities not only of the Democratic Party, but of this side of the aisle on the Democratic side, and also the priorities of all Americans. Our vice chair, Mr. JOHN LARSON, communicates in the best way to many, many Democrats, Republicans, and Independents about our plan on this side of the aisle.

It would not be a plan, it would actually be action if we were in the majority. I think it is important to come up with a comprehensive approach, Mr. Speaker, and using a team effort to move us in the right direction as a country; whether it be homeland security, innovation, affordable health care, or other initiatives that we all embrace. If we can come together in a bipartisan way, then America will be stronger, and also other countries throughout the world will be stronger based on our leadership.

Unfortunately, we are not providing that leadership right now. When I say "we," I am talking about the Republican majority coming together with Democrats and finding a bipartisan way to approach many of the issues that are facing our country right now. That is very, very unfortunate. The work of the 30-something Working Group is to make sure that we can promote ideas that all Americans embrace, not just Democrats, Independents, and Republicans, but all Americans, even those that are not taking part in the voting process that we have throughout the country.

One may call it apathy of voting, but I think that I would phrase it as a number of Americans having very little trust in this system, very little trust in what goes on here in the Congress, very little trust in what happens over at the White House. And I think it is very, very important that we have a paradigm shift. I will go further and add that we need a shift in thinking here in Washington, DC, so that all Americans feel a part of this process; so that all Americans feel that they are being leveled with; and that all Americans know that the individuals that they elected from their communities, their cities or counties, that they have their best interests at heart when they come here to the U.S. House of Representatives.

□ 2250

Today we are going to talk about a number of issues, issues that are facing everyday Americans and things that we should be promoting here as Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, some of the things I think are very disturbing that not only I am reading in the paper but Americans are

reading in the paper and watching on the news.

The whole issue as it relates to port deals, America being sold off not by foreign countries but by the policy that we pass here on this floor that have accumulated more debt in 4 years to foreign nations, foreign nations are buying U.S. debt, unprecedented in the history of the Republic. Ever since we have been a country, no other time such as this time have other countries owned so much of our debt. I think it is important for us to remember because there are a number of my constituents and a number of Americans that have fought hard. Literally, their grandparents have fought hard for them to salute one flag. I think we are putting that spirit, that good history that we have and the future they fought for to allow our children and grandchildren to salute one flag, not to have foreign interests owning our debt. I think it is very, very important that we pay close attention to that.

I am glad to be joined tonight by Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ from South Florida.

Congresswoman, I am glad we are continuing to have a level of consistency on not only challenging the Republican majority. The gentlewoman knows if we were in the majority, it would not be talk. We would be on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives talking about things that would make the lives better of Americans. I think the only thing that is stopping us from doing that is having enough votes in this House to have that vision turn into reality. I look forward to that day because I believe in this year Americans will have an opportunity to be able to promote their ideas and what they feel. Be it a Democrat, a Republican, a Green Party or an Independent, or a brand new voter, they will be able to have their voice heard.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It is a pleasure to join the gentleman for our 30-something Working Group hour.

When I have been home in the community you and I share, I noticed, and this feeling is so palpable among the average voter, the average citizen in America, and I have been to several different cities in the last number of weeks, and to a person, regardless of party, Americana's confidence in their government has been badly shaken, and badly shaken because they look to the leadership here, the Republican leadership, because we do not control a thing. They have the Presidency, the House and the Senate. So when I say that their confidence in their government and leadership is badly shaken, it is essentially the fault of the Republican leadership. It is so disturbing.

I have only been in the Congress a year. I could list countless examples and share with people who have expressed their frustration and their sadness and their angst. My first year in Congress was capped by the bookends, starting 10 weeks into my service here, with the Terri Schiavo case and ending

the year with the confirmation of Judge Alito, now Justice Alito, to the Supreme Court who obviously we fear will further erode the right to privacy that we began the year eroding with the Terry Schiavo case.

If you look in between, sandwiched between those bookends, we have Hurricane Katrina, this port deal, we have the deficit. You have the debt, you have now the debt limit that we are struggling with, the budget reconciliation bill, the countless irresponsible budget cuts and the privatization of Social Security, the Medicare prescription drug fiasco, who the senior citizens that the gentleman and I represent, they are just in tears. They do not know what to do. Just in our community alone, there are 43 different plans offered by 18 different companies. It is pure insanity.

So it is no wonder that our constituents and the American people are frustrated. Their confidence in their leadership is badly shaken. Our responsibility over the next several months is going to be to help restore that confidence because we have that ability. We have an agenda and the things that we would do if we were here would restore that confidence, and those are the kinds of things that we talk about on this floor.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We like third-party validators, and I think it is important for the American people to understand this is not something that Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN or other members of the 30-something Working Group just dream up. I think it is important as an American, leave alone a Member of Congress. I am alarmed and very, very concerned about what is happening. I have children. I pray to God that they have children and the family line continues.

But I am concerned about right now. I am concerned about what is happening as relates to the irresponsible policies that have been passed by the Republican majority.

We are all friends. We all put our pants on one leg at a time, or what have you, but I think it is important that we alert Americans about this unprecedented time in the history of the country. I am saying right now as we speak, this moment.

I want to hold up, this is an article that came out today. It is an AP story. Any of the Members in their office can pull this up from the AP Web site. I think it is important. It says "Treasury Details Its Steps to Avoid Debt Limit." I want to read a couple of paragraphs here. Treasury Secretary John Snow, and this is Secretary Snow, he is a good guy. He is just an accountant for the United States of America. We appreciate his service and what he does in the Treasury Department. But John Snow told the Congress yesterday that the administration has taken all prudent and legal actions, to include tapping certain government retirement funds, to keep from reaching the \$8.2 trillion national debt limit.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about this because now we are tapping into funds that not only Federal workers but the people on the United States of America count on us to be able to govern correctly. In a letter to Congress, Snow urged lawmakers to pass a new debt ceiling immediately to avoid the first default on obligations in U.S. history.

Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about something that I embellished. This is what Mr. Snow said from the Treasury Department.

If I am the Republican majority, leave alone the leadership, I would be alarmed. I would sit up in my bed and say, we have to do something about it. What is unfortunate is that I know, as sure as my name is KENDRICK MEEK, representing Florida's 17th Congressional District, and by that we have been validated to represent the people of the United States of America, I know the Republican majority is going to rubber-stamp what Secretary Snow needs, because it is an outrageous example of the kind of spending and borrowing that this majority has taken us into.

I think it is important to promote what we have been trying to do on this floor as Democrats, time after time again, promoting pay-as-you-go versus borrowing. We are not out of control, the Republican majority is out of control. It is not just me name calling or finger pointing. This is fact, not fiction. I can see if it were fiction and if we were doing what we call in Washington, DC, the Potomac two step. I go left, you go right; no, this is what is printed not only in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, when you have the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Republican Senate, we have to be very alarmed. For Republicans and Independents that are paying attention to what we are saying on this floor, and other parties, they cannot say oh, that is just the Democrats glossing over the facts.

□ 2300

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I am a freshman, and I have only been here a year, and I see this chart in between us. I am wondering, is this potential increase in the debt limit unprecedented? Is it the first time it has happened? Just illuminate for me what the history of debt limit increases is, if there is one.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, there have been in this Republican House, and I am just going to talk about President Bush being in office, this Republican majority, I am going to point the letters out and let you go ahead and drive your point.

December 29, a letter written, Mr. Speaker, in the closing days of 2005, the closing days, the 29th. Americans think about what they were doing on the 29th. Many Americans were off work, those that had jobs and what have you,

celebrating with their families, thinking about the new year.

Secretary Snow found his way to the office to send this letter to one of our colleagues over in the Congress, over in the Senate, that says, "We must raise the debt limit or we will be unable to continue to finance government operations."

That is just for this round. I mean, I think it is important that we get staff to be able to get the rest of the letters that Secretary Snow wrote.

Here is a letter just written in February, February 16. This letter is to the ranking member, Mr. JOHN SPRATT, who is the ranking member on the Democratic side, again saying, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, we must do this now, Mr. Speaker, saying we must raise this debt limit as soon as possible or they are going to have to go into the Federal retirement system and stop paying into that system.

I want to say to the Federal workers, because we believe in third party validators and also believe in telling the truth, the Secretary goes on to say, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, he believes once the debt limit is raised, we will be able to pay back into the retirement system.

These letters are coming so fast and furious, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, we can't get them up on the big board. Here is a letter, March 6, that was just yesterday. Secretary Snow, this is alarming, he is saying, did you receive my two letters beforehand?

Then he talks to the press. We have a problem. NASA is also located in Florida, but also in Houston, but Houston, we have a problem. He is saying to the United States Congress, we have a problem.

How did we come about the problem and having to raise the debt ceiling? It is because of the policies of the Republican majority that have rubber stamped everything the President said do.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, yes, there are a number of letters and alarms going off.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I have another question. In looking over our third party validators, I am wondering if you have got the Secretary of the Treasury setting off alarm bells and really saying that there is fire in the theater, why is it that we have not seen an increase in the debt limit on the floor? Could it perhaps be that that is something that the Republican leadership thinks is unwise to have their Members vote on? Is it that this is not the first time, as I asked you earlier, that the debt limit has been increased?

In looking at this chart just in the last few minutes, I notice that in June of 2002 the debt limit was increased by \$450 billion. And who was President then?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. President Bush.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I believe President Bush was in office then. In May of 2003, the debt limit was in-

creased by another \$984 billion, with a B. In November of 2004, the year of the election, \$800 billion. We have a \$781 billion increase pending now, with a total increase of \$3.015 trillion.

When President Clinton was in office, I was in the State legislature then, for a time until you were elected to Congress you were too, we had a system in place called PAYGO, pay-as-you-go, which it is my understanding is similar to the way people prefer in America to run their households, where you do not spend money that you don't have, unlike what is going on under the Republican leadership where they appear to enjoy spending like drunken sailors and "no" doesn't appear to be possible under this administration, unless, of course, it is to talk about continuing tax cuts for the wealthiest. We say "yes" to that. We say "yes" to anything politically that they want to advance. The "no" is to people who can't afford health care, cutting Medicaid. The "no" that they propose to say is to people who are struggling to pay for higher education.

So, if we went back to PAYGO rules, which we have proposed time and again and they have rejected time and again, then we would be again in a situation where it wouldn't be necessary to increase the debt limit because we would be only spending money that we have.

Here is another third party validator, which is the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. In 2006, in this budget resolution, of course it was defeated, 228 Republicans voted against it, it was defeated 264-165 when we proposed to return to the pay-as-you-go rules. Then again last year, it was defeated 232-194 and 224 Republicans voted against it.

So, to me to break this down in more simple terms, because PAYGO and billions and trillions and debt limit is something that if you are not dealing with it on a daily basis, it is somewhat difficult to understand, one of the things we like to do here is break things down for people that may be listening into regular terms, into the things that they deal with every day.

So I thought, Mr. Speaker, it would be a good idea, because a billion is a very big number, a billion is a hard concept to grasp, because most people don't deal in the billions when they are dealing with their everyday normal activity, so let's try to define what a billion is in the way that people think about things in their daily life.

Broken down, a billion hours ago, for example, humans were making their first tools in the stone age. That is how much a billion hours ago was, if you are thinking about what a billion means.

Let's think about what happened a billion seconds ago. A billion seconds ago it was 1975 and the last American troops had just pulled out of Vietnam. That is how big a billion is. We are in 2006. That was 30 years, 31 years ago.

A billion minutes ago it was 104 A.D., Mr. Speaker, and the Chinese first invented paper. That is how long ago it

was, if you think about a billion in terms of minutes.

Then a billion dollars ago, under this administration and under the Republican leadership, a billion dollars ago was only 3 hours and 32 minutes at the rate that the administration and this Republican Congress spends money.

So we have a billion hours ago, it was the stone age; a billion seconds ago, it was 31 years ago; a billion minutes ago, it was 104 A.D. and we were first talking about the invention of paper. But under the Republican leadership and this administration, a billion dollars ago was only 3 hours 32 minutes at the rate of spending under this administration and the Congressional leadership. It is just astonishing, it really is, if you think about it, broken down in this way.

All the American people want is their confidence restored. All they want to see is that the people here in this Chamber are using their heads and applying some common sense and thinking about the budget and the money that we spend in the way they would like to think about their own household budget, spending the money that we have, spending it wisely, spending it on things that they care about, not giving away the store, which unfortunately, it appears to be the direction that we have been going in.

We are giving away the store in so many ways. Like the port deal, for example. We represent Miami, both of us. I represent Fort Lauderdale. I have both Port Everglades and the port of Miami abutting my district.

I went down to the port of Miami, you and I have both been there, it is one of the six ports that the Dubai Ports World deal impacts, and for the people that I have talked to in our community and the calls and communications I have been getting, it defies logic. They really just cannot believe that the President does not understand why people are so deeply concerned that we would have a foreign government-owned corporation running the terminal operations at six of our major ports.

This is not just any government, this is a government that just 5 years ago was involved directly, indirectly, in both tangential and more substantive ways in the 9/11 attacks.

□ 2310

There were 58 references in the 9/11 Commission Report to the United Arab Emirates and their involvement, either through allowing the 9/11 financing to be funneled through their banks, or just the fact that two of the 9/11 terrorists lived in the United Arab Emirates.

But the astonishing thing is that there were no national security reviews triggered under the law when the administration's committee that reviewed these deals took a look at it. There were no alarm bells set off. And that is even more astonishing because it is not even like we are checking the vast majority of containers and goods

that come through our ports. Less than 6 percent, if you take a look at this chart, less than 6 percent of U.S. cargo coming through our ports is physically inspected, Mr. Speaker. Ninety-five percent is not inspected, 5 percent is inspected.

And that is in spite of the fact that Democrats have repeatedly proposed increasing the funding so that we can ensure more of the cargo coming through our ports is inspected. Literally what I learned when I went to the Port of Miami, Mr. MEEK, is that in the last 5 years we have increased our security funding at our airports by \$18 billion, which is a good thing. I mean that is absolutely essential.

And we have increased our port security funding by \$700 million. Now, if you remember, I just went over the difference of what a billion means. So \$18 billion on airport security, less than \$700 million on port security.

I mean, you cannot rest our Nation's security on taking your shoes off as you go through the magnetometer at an airport. That cannot be the sum total of the additional security that we have increased since 9/11. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I think the point was, and we were all campaigning during the initial vote for the war. But I remember making the argument as I was campaigning, as I think a lot of other Democrats were here in the House, instead of going off to war, the alternative was, now we are spending a billion and a half dollars a week in Iraq, I think one of the alternative proposals was to fund this stuff, take care of the Nation's security, take care of the ports, make sure that we have enough people to do the kind of real inspection that we think needs to be done instead of spending the money elsewhere.

And when you think about it in a logical way, that this money is going to be spent to hire American workers to protect America, it makes a lot of sense.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It has just been astonishing to me. I literally have had more calls in a shorter period of time on this issue from constituents, and not the organized calls, not the calls that groups generate, that they, you know, send an e-mail out to their members and say, call your Congresswoman, here is her phone number.

This is Joe and Jane Average Constituent who saw the news or read the newspaper or listened to the radio and called me and said, you know, what is going on here? Do these people not get it? How could they not get it? I have had little old ladies crying on the other end of the phone in my district office because the flames that have been fanned so much by this administration on the terror threat and national security, which is understandable because we really needed to raise the level of concern in America about being conscious of our own security. That is understandable.

But for the President to be shocked by the American people's reaction, that is what is so astonishing, that they are really the victims, I guess. Their decision is really the result of their own magnification of this issue. And, you know, that they have not responded with the funding that we need to enhance port security is just truly shocking.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I just want to make this point too, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, we are not saying that when the Democrats take over in January that all of a sudden we are going to inspect every single ship that comes into the United States of America. That is not what we are saying.

But what we are saying, first is because we are going to have to start balancing the budget and start plugging a lot of the holes that the Republican majority will have left us to clean up, what we are saying is, 5 percent of the cargo coming in is a small amount.

And when the Democrats are in charge, we want to refocus our efforts on port security and make a little bit more of an effort. So it may not be 100 percent, but we are saying that it is a priority for us to make this kind of investment.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The question, Mr. Speaker here is, does the Republican majority have the will and the desire to make the kind of change we need to take or make to protect this country? The will and the desire.

Now, the will may be there, but the desire is questionable. And I think it is important, because there are other priorities that the Republican majority, and I would say some of them join in with some of us Democrats, very few, unfortunately, it is in the single digits, because we are not able to promote some of things that we need to promote to protect this country.

Now over the weekend, there were a lot of pundits out there talking about, wow, you know, this thing may very well change, this thing meaning the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, because the Republican majority, Mr. Speaker, has fumbled the ball time after time again.

Since this is now NCAA time, they have lost the ball when they were supposed to shoot a shot on behalf of protecting this country. The other team is taking it the other way. I think it is important to get in the spirit. We have to break this thing down so that we all understand. Some people say we need to put the cookie on the bottom shelf so that everyone can reach.

I think it is important. I am using a metaphor, but I think it is important that everyone understands. Folks are wondering why we are alarmed. Now I can tell you, I speak here with great confidence, Mr. Speaker, because I have the facts here not fiction. I think it is important, Mr. RYAN, that we share with people that on January 29, 2005, during a meeting of the House and Senate conferees, our ranking Member on Appropriations, Mr. OBEY, offered,

along with Senator BYRD, one of the longest-serving Senators over in the Senate, offered an amendment to increase funding for port and container security by \$300 million.

The house conferees defeated the amendment along party lines. When we say along party lines, I want to make sure the Members understand. That means Republicans voted one way against that, increasing the funding so that we can be able to do what was said, secure the containers more.

Can we get that container chart up here, because I want to make sure, just in case the Republican majority, some of the Members have their television turned down, that they are able to see what we are talking about. Because I think it is important. There it is right there. It is already there.

These containers here that are being checked, the 5 percent of them, and I am questioning that as a Member of the Homeland Security Committee if it is really 5 percent. As Democrats, Mr. Speaker, we are not saying that we want to do something about it, we are trying to do something about it. But the Republican majority is not allowing us to do so.

And we want to make sure that we share with them, because we want their constituents to know and we want our constituents to know that we are fighting on their behalf. All of us are Americans saluting one flag.

On October 7, 2005, during a meeting of House and Senate conferees, that is when House and Senate Members come together. When the House and Senate pass their individual bills, they select certain Members to be able to go into a room and work out the differences between that bill.

That goes back to in our generation a cartoon, I am Just a Bill in Capitol Hill. Again, Senator BYRD and Representative OBEY, offered an amendment to increase funding to enhance port security by \$150 million. Republicans defeated it on a party-line vote.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I know you are getting on a roll.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I wanted to do a couple more.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a point here. The last chart that we had up said that the Coast Guard is saying they need a \$7 billion increase in funding. Now you are reading these amendments.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, wait. Hasn't the President and the Republican majority said, we want to listen to people in the field and give them what they need when they ask for it? Am I correct?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is right. Again this is a third-party validator. This is from the Federal Register. Coast Guard estimate to implement the Maritime Transportation Security Act, how much money do we need to protect ourselves? \$7 billion.

What has the Republican Congress appropriated? \$900 million, .9 billion. So we have got a long way to go here

as you can see. So as Mr. MEEK is going to start reading this stuff, Mr. Speaker, this is billions.

Democrats were trying to put amendments on that were like \$150 million. We are not even trying to increase it all that much. But we are saying we tried a billion. We tried \$500 million.

□ 2320

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We are trying to work in a bipartisan way.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There is a \$6 billion gap between what the Coast Guard says they need and what the Republican Congress appropriated.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You are making a strong point here, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it is not a point. This is fact, Mr. Speaker. I think it is important that we say June 18, 2004, Democrats supported an amendment to increase port container security by \$400 million. Republicans have refused to allow it to be considered, the amendment to be considered. That means they moved on a procedural way.

June 9, 2004, Democrats supported Obey amendment once again in Appropriations Committee to increase container security by \$400 million. Republicans defeated it on a party-line vote. That is House report 108-541, page 128.

Now, we have all of this stuff that will be on the Web site, Mr. Speaker, so that other Members can get to it, and it goes on and on and on.

Enough of this, the Democrats do not have plans. That is what the majority wants you to believe. We have plans. Unfortunately, they cannot be reality because the Republican majority does not want to work in a bipartisan way. And it is upsetting. It is beyond upsetting because our country is being jeopardized. Meanwhile, we have individuals that are hired by the Republican majority going out here talking to these cable shows and Sunday shows on spend. This is not about spend. This is about making America stronger and more secure.

The bottom line is the reason why, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, many of the Republicans are getting a little shaky now, because on this subject, Mr. Speaker, we have been on top of it. The record speaks for itself. Fiscal responsibility: we have been on top of it. On innovation: there is not an issue that Americans are looking for that we have not tried to address and continued to try to address even though we are in the minority. Being in the minority is not an excuse for us. It is just something that does not allow us procedurally to allow these American ideas to bubble up and allow the American people to be prepared.

You want to talk about fuel. We can talk about that too. You can talk about energy. We can do all of these things. But until the American people truly understand that what they hear from the Republican majority is not necessarily fact, then we are going to

continue to go in the wrong direction as it relates to the history of this country.

Being a Member of this Congress, I almost feel that we are just as important as the Continental Congress, the first Congress, because now, no other time in the history of the country have we been in this kind of posture as a country, not due to the fact what folks are doing on foreign soil. It is what the Republican majority is doing to us right now based on friends and family and a number of things that have taken place in this Chamber unprecedented.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I am sorry, I wanted to make sure I got that out because I think it is important, not only third-party validators, the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, and actions we have taken, because it does not upset me, the fact that this stuff is not being reported the way it should be reported; but I am extremely concerned about the fact that we have the Republican majority that is not even shaken by this. Meanwhile, 50 percent of our debt, almost 50 percent of our debt is being owned by foreign interests.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. What is amazing, and you are so right, what has happened in the last several weeks is there has been an effort by the Bush administration since this DPW port deal has come to light to portray this as people who have a problem with Middle Eastern countries and even have gone so far as to say, well, why are you concerned, because Federal agencies control and conduct all port security.

I learned and knew this, but it was illuminated even more clearly when I went to the port that that is not the case. Yes, on the external port properties the government body running the port, in our case, in Miami it is the Board of County Commissioners in Miami, they are responsible for external security. But at a terminal in the Port of Miami Terminal Operating Company and under the five other terminals that DPW would take over, they are responsible for their own internal security. They will have intimate knowledge of the external security on the port property, and they are responsible for security internally.

This is a foreign government-owned company. This is not a private company from a foreign country. It is a foreign government-owned company.

Would it be okay with anyone in this country, not the least of which should be the Bush administration, if the same situation occurred in an airport? Would we let a foreign government-owned company run a terminal in our airports? Would we let them control loading and off-loading passengers or cargo coming into an airport? Not in a billion, no pun intended, years. Really.

Why are they so unconcerned about port security?

Let us look at what the Coast Guard is responsible for. Again, third-party

validators. The Coast Guard on a typical day saves 15 lives, assists 117 people in distress, protects \$2.8 million in property, interdicts 30 illegal migrants at sea, conducts 90 search and rescue cases, seizes \$21 million worth of illegal drugs, responds to 11 oil and hazardous chemical spills, and boards and inspects 122 vessels.

There are 361 ports in this country that they are responsible for, and we have 95,000 miles of coastline. And the difference between what the Coast Guard has said they needed, \$7.2 billion to really complete their mission in terms of port security, and what the Republican leadership here has appropriated, \$910 million, is \$6 billion. There is a disconnect from the top to the bottom here. It is shocking.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. When you think about the \$16 billion in corporate welfare that we have given to the energy companies; when you think about the billions and billions and billions of dollars in subsidies we have given to the health insurance industry through the prescription drug program that has been a total debacle, you will see that what the Democrats are saying is that we have a better plan.

We will not give \$16 billion to the oil industry, the most profitable industry in the world, Mr. Speaker. We want to spend that money prudently, in a fashion that best represents the interests of the American people. And that is what we have been trying to do as Mr. MEEK went through, Mr. Speaker. Amendment after amendment after amendment, the Democrats and the minority tried to attach to the majority Republican Party's bills. And we tried to get September 29, and you can get all of this, and we should put all of this on our Web site so everyone can see Democrats have tried and tried and tried to get increased funding for homeland security and for the protection of our ports, whether it was Mr. OBEY from Wisconsin, Mr. SABO, Senator BYRD, Mr. OBEY, Mr. SABO again and again and again. All throughout.

This sheet goes from 2001, 2003, 2003, 2003, 2003, 2004, 2004. Time and time again the Democratic Party has tried to get amendments on spending bills that would increase funding for port security by \$100 million, by \$500 million, by more if we could try to plug this gap.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. The thing that we did not mention yet that is the most outrageous is the President in his budget that he just proposed actually eliminates direct port security grants. He literally says, no, no, no, we do not need to directly appropriate grant money to individual ports for port security. I have a bright idea. He has a bright idea. He wants to let ports compete for security grant funding with railway stations and airports and have any one of these transportation-related entryways to our country compete for security grants.

I mean, I do not understand that. He proposed it last year, and the response

from the Republican Congress was a \$910 million appropriations for port security. And now he is proposing it yet again.

□ 2330

Where are their priorities? If we are going to propose cuts to try to get the budget deficit situation under control, do we start with port security? I mean, when they are sitting down around the table in the Roosevelt Room, I really want to be a fly on the wall sometimes. Who in there is saying port security grants, that is what we should, that is how we are going to solve the deficit? Medicaid funding, we have got all the poor people covered with health care; who are the people the most in need, where are our most significant needs, let us cut those. It is astonishing.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Again, I just want to make this point because we are not demagoguing this issue. What we are saying is 95 percent of the cargo coming into the country is not inspected. All we are saying is it should not be 5 percent. Should it be 90 or 80 or 70 or 50 or 40? It should be certainly something more than 5 percent, and all we are saying is we are giving corporate subsidies to the oil industry, giving corporate subsidies to the energy companies, giving corporate subsidies, totally, billions and billions and billions, to the health industry. You are giving tax cuts to Bill Gates, and this is going on.

So Democrats, Mr. Speaker, want to say let us increase this gradually as we are able to balance the budget and hopefully make investments in this. You are going to hire American people, hire American worker, protect the country, send a signal across the world that do not even try it, okay. That is the bottom line.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There is also specifically related to this Dubai Ports World deal a way to deal with it. There is the bigger issue of port security, and then there is this deal. What is it that is so darn important about this deal that it caused the President to threaten his first veto that if, God forbid, the Congress would do something crazy like pass legislation to stop it, to slow it down to conduct the national security review that should be done? I have the legislation that I have introduced on the House side and Senators MENENDEZ and CLINTON and BILL NELSON from our State that have introduced on the Senate side that would say that we should not allow foreign government companies to own or lease ports from us in this country and we should stop this deal and we should review the other foreign government-owned terminals that currently already are in the United States and give congressional oversight in that area.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is a no-brainer, and we called for a vote last week, Mr. Speaker, to stop the port deal, period. Forty-five days for what? What do we have to think about

here? That 45 days later we are going to say it is okay for foreign interests to be able to operate six of our major ports, including New York, that the whole thing, 9/11, should mean something? Our major ports, fine, that is okay, but let me tell you something, we do not have to wait 45 days to not do the deal. You got folks in the Republican majority who say, well, you know, after 45-days we are going to—after 45 days, the facts are still going to be the facts.

The Coast Guard raised the question of security as it relates to this port deal, and deals like this happen every day here in Washington, D.C., under this Republican majority and this White House. The President dared the Congress to pass a bill because he would veto it. That is on the record. I did not say it. He said it.

You know something, I would like to tell the Republican majority to leader it. We are trying to call for a vote, and I guarantee you there will be another attempt to call a vote this week. We want to separate the leaders from the followers. We say we want to balance the budget, which we have done. The Republican majority say they want to cut it in half. You take the choice what you want. Do you want to continue to have foreign countries buy our debt? But that is for individuals willing to be followers. The thing about the United States is we believe in leadership. We want to lead. We do not want to follow.

The bottom line is the Republican majority is fine with following economically, following as it relates to leadership on this port deal. They have a problem because they have been rubber stamping everything that the President has said. The President says let us turn right, okay, let us turn right; okay, let us turn left, they turn left. That is not what the Constitution says.

We did not stand out in front of the precinct saying, hey, I am running for Congress; I am willing to do everything that the President asks me to do, regardless of how you feel about it. That is not what we ran for office for, Mr. Speaker.

So when we look at these deals, I think it is very, very important. Secretary Snow is asking us to raise the debt ceiling by \$82 billion. Who is going to buy that debt? Who is going to buy it?

Can I for a minute talk about who is buying it and who will buy it? Here is my map here again. This is not a weather map. This is a map to talk about who is going to buy this \$821 billion that Secretary Snow is calling for, not because he feels like it. It is because he has to.

I am going to start off with the big one. Japan, \$862 billion of our debt. Japan is not a county anywhere in any of these States. China, Red China, China has all the jobs. China, that has a positive trade with the United States but we do not have positive trade with them, are buying up our country while

the Republican majority is sitting here saying do not worry about it America, trust us. The UK, \$223.2 billion owed of the United States of America debt. Taiwan, \$71.3 billion. Korea, that should ring a bell with some people and especially some of our veterans, \$66.5 billion. Germany, Germany should ring a bell with some of our veterans, \$65.7 billion of our debt, and Canada, just north of, us \$53.8 billion. OPEC Nations, oh, wow, who are they? It happens to be Saudi Arabia, happens to be Iran, happens to be Iraq.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. UAE.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. \$67.8 billion. So, Mr. Speaker, when we start talking about raising the debt ceiling and responsibility, we balanced the budget. We did not have these issues. When I say "we," I am saying the Democratic Congress balanced the budget without a single Republican vote.

The reason why I speak boldly on this issue is the fact that it is fact and it is not fiction and that we are sharing it with them. The real issue, when you talk about the ports, some Members may say the bill that you have and a number of Members signed on to in the Senate, a number of Members who have signed on to it, Mr. Speaker, they are saying, well, you know, I do not represent a port city or a coastal city so I do not have anything to worry about. Well, guess what, these containers that we see here are all throughout America because these containers are loaded on to trucks and trains, and they go through America. If a terrorist wants to put a nuclear device in one of these containers to be put into activation in a certain U.S. city, they have the power to do so because they know that we only check 5 percent. That is not because we cannot check more. It is because we cannot get amendments passed here as Democrats in the minority to check more and protect America. So I think it is important we do it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think it is important for us to say, Mr. Speaker, to the Members of this chamber that this is brinksmanship now with the debt ceiling. We are on the line here, and Secretary Snow, and I do not know if you went over this before.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I did but go over it again.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. March 6 sent a letter to John Spratt who is our ranking Democrat on the Budget Committee. Today, it was reported in the Associated Press the Secretary told Congress yesterday in this letter, the administration is taking, quote, all prudent and legal actions, end quote, including tapping certain government retirement funds. Now they are tapping retirement funds to keep from reaching the \$8.2 trillion national debt limit, and in the letter to Congress he said that we need to raise the debt ceiling immediately to avoid the first government default on its obligations in U.S. history.

□ 2340

If this outfit hasn't gotten us into a real predicament, I don't know what a

predicament is. If we don't raise the debt ceiling, we are going to default on our obligations. The United States of America, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in our history.

I would be happy to yield.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There is a very simple solution: we return to PAYGO rules. We return to the days when we spent what we had, like people in American households try to do every single day and struggle to do. But we have the ability to establish a rule. We have the ability to follow a rule that says we will only spend what we have. We have advocated, as Democrats, restoring the PAYGO rule, and we have been repeatedly rejected by the Republican leadership because they just want to continue to borrow and spend, borrow and spend.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. So let us look at this. We talked about two things basically tonight. We talked about the ports and the debt ceiling. On the port deal, to try to increase spending, the Democrats offered, I don't know, a dozen different amendments to try to increase funding from U.S. ports, and each time the Republican majority shot our idea down.

We had ideas. We offered solutions. The Republican majority, Mr. Speaker, shot us down. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ just talked about the pay-as-you-go system, where if you pay more for a program, you have to find money somewhere. You have to raise revenue or cut spending, but you have to pay for it so we don't have to borrow from all these foreign countries.

Former Member Mr. Stenholm offered an amendment to try to implement PAYGO rules into the budget process. Mr. THOMPSON from California tried to do it, Mr. MOORE from Kansas tried to do it, and Mr. SPRATT tried to do it on numerous occasions, to implement pay-as-you-go rules to try to constrain the reckless spending from our Republican colleagues, Mr. Speaker. And in each instance, Mr. MEEK, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, it was the Republican majority who said we will not accept fiscal discipline, we will not accept increased funding for our ports; and the Democrats were the party offering the ideas and offering the amendments time and time and time and time again to prevent this from happening, where we owe Japan \$682 billion, we owe China \$250 billion, and we owe OPEC countries, Mr. MEEK, \$67.8 billion.

Now, that is a shame. And I don't like that. And I don't think the American people like that.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, you are 110 percent right. As we close, Mr. Speaker, since we have only 3 minutes or so left, once again we have seen this chart, and as I have said before, it will be in the National Archives. We are not trying to make history, but just to report what is going on here so the American people will know this.

In 224 years of great history in this great country of ours, 1776 to 2000, 42

Presidents, \$1.01 trillion was borrowed from foreign nations. That is 224 years. And in 4 years, from 2001 to 2005, President Bush, and we don't want to leave out the Republican Congress, borrowed \$1.05 trillion from foreign nations, in 4 years, jeopardizing the financial security of this country.

Mr. RYAN, you are 110 percent right to be alarmed.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You are 110 percent right to be alarmed.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Republican majority to give us a good way to talk about this. They can't. They can't, Mr. Speaker. We hope we can have what we call a paradigm shift, a change in the way we do business here in Washington, D.C., not on behalf of the Democratic Party but on behalf of the American people.

So we are looking for a comprehensive game plan, Mr. Speaker, because we have one. We have one on this side. History is on our side. The precedent is on our side of trying to do something about it. We ask for the majority to join us in this.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. MEEK, the point I want to add is this body has openings for people of courage, and we encourage them to apply for those jobs over the next several months.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Job openings.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There are job openings for people of courage. We need a few more people of courage. There are a couple on that side, but we need a whole lot more.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, www.HouseDemocrats.gov/30something. That is www.HouseDemocrats.gov/30something. Members of Congress can go to this Web site and access all of the charts, see our third-party validators, and see why we are so alarmed at what is going on here in our Nation's capital.

I yield to my good friend, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, with that we would like to thank not only the Democratic leadership but also many of us here in the House who are trying to work hard on behalf of the American people. I know we all are, but I think it is important that we bring these issues to the forefront.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). The Chair would remind Members to address their remarks to the Chair and not to persons outside the Chamber.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. COSTA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week.